

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for handling contracts in a supply chain management framework, comprising:
 - a) an independent supply chain manager pre-negotiating master contract parameters for orders between a plurality of independent suppliers and independent distributors and including assigning independent distributor - independent supplier relationships;
 - b) the independent supply chain manager assigning one of the independent distributors for each of a plurality of stores;
 - c)[.] electronically receiving sales information from the plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network, the sales information comprising amounts of goods sold by the stores;
 - d) generating an electronic order form for one of the independent distributors based on the sales information for placing an order with the distributor;
 - e) selecting one of a plurality of contract templates for a supplier – distributor order;
 - f)[e]) electronically populating a plurality of fields in the selected contract template with the pre-negotiated master contract parameters to obtain a draft contract;
 - g[f]) transmitting the ~~selected~~ draft contract to one of the independent suppliers and one of the independent distributors;
 - h[g]) receiving data from the independent supplier and independent distributor utilizing a network where the data was generated independently of the network, the

data relating to the sale of products between the supplier and distributor in accordance with a contract resulting from the draft contract;

i[h]) selecting at least one contract term from the contract and comparing that contract term to the received data;

j[i]) generating a contract communication if there is a discrepancy between the at least one contract term and the received data; and

k[j]) maintaining an electronic database of ~~the~~ details of the sales information, substantially all electronic orders to distributors, master contract parameters for orders between suppliers and distributors, and the data from the independent supplier and independent distributor relating to the sale of products between the supplier and distributor~~for contracts between suppliers and distributors.~~

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the contract templates compliment each other.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein each contract template includes portions to be filled out by the independent supplier or independent distributors~~supply chain participants.~~

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the selected contract template is transmitted to the independent supplier or independent distributors~~supply chain participant~~ utilizing the network.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the network includes the Internet.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein an indication of acceptance of the contract is received from the independent suppliers~~supply chain participant.~~

7. (Currently Amended) A system for handling contracts in a supply chain management framework, wherein an independent supply chain manager pre-negotiates master contract parameters for orders between a plurality of independent suppliers and independent

distributors, including assigning independent distributor - independent supplier relationships,
comprising:

an electronic storage; and

a set of processors that use the electronic storage and include among them the
following logic elements

~~a) — an independent supply chain manager negotiating master contract
parameters for orders between a plurality of independent suppliers and independent
distributors and including assigning independent distributor — independent supplier
relationships;~~

a[b]) logic for the independent supply chain manager assigning one of the
independent distributors for each of a plurality of stores;

b[c]) logic for electronically receiving sales information from the plurality of
stores of a supply chain utilizing a network, the sales information comprising amounts of
goods sold by the stores;

c[d]) logic for generating an electronic order form to one of the independent
distributors based on the sales information for placing an order with the distributor;

d[e]) logic for selecting one of a plurality of contract templates for a supplier
— distributor order;

e[f]) logic for electronically populating a plurality of fields in the selected
contract template with the pre-negotiated master contract parameters to obtain a draft
contract;

f[g]) logic for transmitting the ~~selected~~-draft contract to one of the
independent suppliers and one of the independent distributors;

g[h]) logic for receiving data from the independent supplier and independent
distributor utilizing a network where the data was generated independently of the network, the

data relating to the sale of products between the supplier and distributor in accordance with a contract resulting from the draft contract;

h[i]) logic for selecting at least one contract term from the contract and comparing that contract term to the received data;

i[j]) logic for generating a contract communication if there is a discrepancy between the at least one contract term and the received data; and

j[k]) logic for maintaining an electronic database of ~~the~~ details of the sales information, substantially all electronic orders to distributors, master contract parameters for orders between suppliers and distributors, and the data from the independent supplier and independent distributor relating to the sale of products between the supplier and distributor~~for contracts between suppliers and distributors.~~

8. (Original) The system of claim 7, wherein the contract templates compliment each other.

9. (Original) The system of claim 7, wherein each contract template includes portions to be filled out by the independent supplier or independent distributors~~supply chain participants.~~

10. (Original) The system of claim 7, wherein the selected contract template is transmitted to the independent supplier or independent distributors~~supply chain participant~~ utilizing the network.

11. (Original) The system of claim 7, wherein the network includes the Internet.

12. (Original) The system of claim 7, wherein an indication of acceptance of the contract is received from the distributor.

13. (Currently Amended) A computer program product for handling contracts in a supply chain management framework, wherein an independent supply chain manager pre-negotiates master contract parameters for orders between a plurality of independent suppliers

and independent distributors, including assigning independent distributor - independent supplier relationships, comprising:

a set of computer usable media having computer readable program code embodied among them to be executed by a computer, the computer readable program code comprising ~~computer code for~~:

~~a) — an independent supply chain manager negotiating master contract parameters for orders between a plurality of independent suppliers and independent distributors and including assigning independent distributor — independent supplier relationships;~~

a[b]) computer code for the independent supply chain manager assigning one of the independent distributors for each of a plurality of stores;

b[c]) computer code for electronically receiving sales information from the plurality of stores of a supply chain utilizing a network, the sales information comprising amounts of goods sold by the stores;

c[d]) computer code for generating an electronic order form to one of the independent distributors based on the sales information for placing an order with the distributor;

d[e]) computer code for selecting one of a plurality of contract templates for a supplier – distributor order;

e[f]) computer code for electronically populating a plurality of fields in the selected contract template with the pre-negotiated master contract parameters to obtain a draft contract;

f[g]) computer code for transmitting the ~~selected~~ draft contract to one of the independent suppliers and one of the independent distributors;

g[h]) computer code for receiving data from the independent supplier and independent distributor utilizing a network where the data was generated independently of the

network, the data relating to the sale of products between the supplier and distributor in accordance with a contract resulting from the draft contract;

h[i]) computer code for selecting at least one contract term from the contract and comparing that contract term to the received data;

i[j]) computer code for generating a contract communication if there is a discrepancy between the at least one contract term and the received data; and

j[k]) computer code for maintaining an electronic database of ~~the~~ details of the sales information, substantially all electronic orders to distributors, master contract parameters for orders between suppliers and distributors, and the data from the independent supplier and independent distributor relating to the sale of products between the supplier and distributor~~for contracts between suppliers and distributors.~~

14. (Original) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the contract templates compliment each other.

15. (Original) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein each contract template includes portions to be filled out by the independent supplier or independent distributors~~supply chain participants.~~

16. (Original) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the selected contract template is transmitted to the independent supplier or independent distributors~~supply chain participant~~ utilizing the network.

17. (Original) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the network includes the Internet.

18. (Original) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein an indication of acceptance of the contract is received from the independent suppliers~~supply chain participant.~~

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the contract term is a designation of contract parties and includes a supplier identifier and a distributor identifier.

20. (Previously presented) The system of claim 7, wherein the contract term is a designation of contract parties and includes a supplier identifier and a distributor identifier.

21. (Previously presented) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the contract term is a designation of contract parties and includes a supplier identifier and a distributor identifier.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the supply chain manager setting an amount of the goods or components of the goods to be distributed to the respective stores based at least in part on the sales information for the respective stores.

23. (Previously presented) The system of claim 7, further comprising the supply chain manager setting an amount of the goods or components of the goods to be distributed to the respective stores based at least in part on the sales information for the respective stores.

24. (Previously presented) The computer program product of claim 13, further comprising the supply chain manager setting an amount of the goods or components of the goods to be distributed to the respective stores based at least in part on the sales information for the respective stores.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the supply chain manager setting a timing of distribution of the goods or components of the goods to be distributed to the respective stores.

26. (Previously presented) The system of claim 7, further comprising logic for the supply chain manager setting a timing of distribution of the goods or components of the goods to be distributed to the respective stores.

27. (Previously presented) The computer program product of claim 13, further comprising computer code for the supply chain manager setting a timing of distribution of the goods or components of the goods to be distributed to the respective stores.

28. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the independent supply chain manager negotiates a minimum volume for the independent supplier of the contract or a minimum volume for an FOB for that independent supplier;

wherein the received data includes a goods volume or a goods component volume in the contract;

determining based on the data that includes a goods volume or a goods component volume if the minimum volume for the independent supplier or minimum volume for the FOB of the supplier has been met; and

generating a volume management communication based on the result of the determination of minimum volume.

29. (Previously presented) The system as defined in claim 7, wherein the independent supply chain manager negotiates a minimum volume for the independent supplier of the contract or a minimum volume for an FOB for that independent supplier;

wherein the received data includes a goods volume or a goods component volume in the contract;

logic for determining based on the data that includes a goods volume or a goods component volume if the minimum volume for the independent supplier or minimum volume for the FOB of the supplier has been met; and

logic for generating a volume management communication based on the result of the determination of minimum volume.

30. (Previously presented) The computer program product as defined in claim 13, wherein the independent supply chain manager negotiates a minimum volume for the independent supplier of the contract or a minimum volume for an FOB for that independent supplier;

wherein the received data includes a goods volume or a goods component volume in the contract;

determining based on the data that includes a goods volume or a goods component volume if the minimum volume for the independent supplier or minimum volume for the FOB of the supplier has been met; and

generating a volume management communication based on the result of the determination of minimum volume.

31. (Previously presented) the method of claim 1, wherein the independent supply chain manager assigns for each of a plurality of stores, one and only one distributor per store to thereby create an exclusive distributor assignment for that store;

based at least in part on received data related to orders fulfilled by one of the independent distributors, determining if the exclusive distributor ~~distribution~~-assignment is being complied with; and

generating an exclusive distributor assignment communication based on the results of the exclusive distributor compliance ~~distribution~~-determination.

32. (Previously presented) the system of claim 7, wherein the independent supply chain manager assigns for each of a plurality of stores, one and only one distributor per store to thereby create an exclusive distributor assignment for that store;

logic for, based at least in part on received data related to orders fulfilled by one of the independent distributors, determining if the exclusive distributor ~~distribution~~-assignment is being complied with; and

logic for generating an exclusive distributor assignment communication based on the results of the exclusive distributor compliance ~~distribution~~-determination.

33. (Previously presented) The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the independent supply chain manager assigns for each of a plurality of stores, one and only one distributor per store to thereby create an exclusive distributor assignment for that store;

computer code for, based at least in part on received data related to orders fulfilled by one of the independent distributors, determining if the exclusive distributor distribution assignment is being complied with; and

computer code for generating an exclusive distributor assignment communication based on the results of the exclusive distributor compliance distribution-determination.